



*The realities of COVID-19 are making working from home – or working remotely – a way for us to continue to perform our job responsibilities and contribute to our organizations. With that in mind, Colliers would like to share some of the best practices that our Workplace Advisory team uses ourselves. The list below will help guide individuals who are working together in different markets or regions and enable teams to act cohesively and support each other, including serving their external clients, regardless of time zone.*

## 12 Best Practices to Work Remotely:

**1 | Build on what you have** – Review your organization's work-from-home (WFH) policy and ensure that it is updated and accurate. Having a policy that is easy to read and supported by leadership will provide clarity and compliance. If your company does not have a WFH policy, use these guidelines to help create one.

**2 | Commit** – As with all team-based initiatives, buy-in and commitment are of the greatest importance. Establish your team's work protocols and agree to adhere to them and follow them. For example, use basic tech tools to show your status or availability, proactively schedule team calls or virtual stand-ups to keep work moving, share calendars and establish a timeline for critical decisions. Empower everyone

to hold each other accountable. Have a leader or manager who models the right behaviors.

**3 | Focus** – When working from home, it's easy to get distracted with household chores like laundry, walking the dog, emptying the dishwasher, etc. Create a routine and schedule that works for you. Establish times when you will focus only on work and breaks when you can allow or accommodate home distractions. Find a room in your house that will enable you to unplug from distractions from family members or roommates. Create a space that supports how you work best. If possible, include daylight, views, ergonomic furniture (especially a good chair), good lighting, easy access to electrical and hi-speed internet/broadband. Try and replicate your office set-up at home. If you normally use multiple screens, for instance, do this in your home set-up. If you have minimal experience working from home, this is the time to create new personal habits to implement focus and establish a new daily routine.

**4 | Use video conferencing** – Every laptop has a camera. Use it! this will help you feel more connected to your team. Enforce a rule or develop a process that encourages everyone to have cameras on during team calls. Not only will cameras

help you feel more connected, but they will make meetings more productive. It's hard to listen, smile and multi-task at the same time.

**5 | Know when to stop** – Commuting to and from work establishes clear boundaries for your work schedule. Remote work has the potential to blur the lines between work and personal life. Develop team rules about the boundaries of work and personal time. More importantly, establish your own rules. You need to give yourself permission to be guilt-free during your personal time at home. When will you not be reachable? When will you start and stop work? Align with your manager and team and stick to it. Answering routine emails and texts in the evenings and the weekends impedes your ability to restore.



## 12 WAYS TO WORK REMOTELY DURING COVID-19



**6 | Personal wellness** – Like always, take short breaks every hour to move, rehydrate, step outside and get some fresh air and, if you are lucky, a little sun. Take some of the time you are saving by not commuting to do something good for your health: walk, exercise or read. One of the most significant contributors to physical and emotional well-being is sleep. Research shows that getting a good night's sleep starts during the day with access to daylight and movement. So, set yourself up for success.

**7 | Use technology** – Check with your WFH or IT policy to ensure you are connecting using the established and approved connections. Vigorously use communication and document sharing software like Slack, Skype, Teams, Google docs, Salesforce, Chatter, Quip, Hive, DropBox, etc. Use workflow management tools to stay in sync with your co-workers. Many of these tools have a presence indicator. Use it to let people know when you are available, busy or away from your desk. Also, record team calls for those who can't make the meeting. Agree on a platform, train and make it a habit.

**8 | Meeting etiquette** – Have a purpose for each meeting and an agenda you stick to. Don't talk over each other and make sure everyone has a place to share and be heard. Make the meeting relevant for all attendees. Help each other.

**9 | Don't forget the water cooler** – We are social beings. We need the glue of our social interactions to make our work-life balanced and more productive. As a team, brainstorm ways to celebrate successes, learn and connect on a personal level. Commit to speaking with someone on your team at

least once a day to avoid feeling isolated. Be deliberate about building in time and permissions to connect on a personal level to discuss vacations, stories and interests/hobbies. Keep it appropriate and contained – just like if you were at the office.

**10 | Reinforce accountability and norms** – After agreeing on how to work with each other remotely – keep each other accountable to this communication process. Leverage tools and technology to keep the work visible. Keep track of the ownership of specific action items to keep people honest about meeting their obligations to the group. Remember, the number one way to build trust is to do what you said you would do.

**11 | Stick with good management practices** – Leaders still need to continually communicate goals, initiatives and 'what matters most'. Regularly share and track how the extended team is meeting its group goals and objectives. Do not forget to celebrate successes!

**12 | Remain fluid** – This may be a new way of working with your team or customers. Continually, look for ways to make things better. Check to make sure that the rules and team norms that you established at the start, lead to the outcomes you intended. If not, adjust them.



**Bonus Tip! Widen the circle of your engagement with your team and colleagues** – Now that your team has good practices about working with each other over distance, bring others in. Invite guests or speakers to join your team calls. Make sure peers at your organization know how to get involved with you and your team. Get upper management to drop into a team meeting occasionally. If you want to take your team meetings to the next level,

integrate the "break out" function with Zoom or another video conferencing tool. It's just like stepping into a huddle room for a quick brainstorm.

Remote work is not new, and the techniques and technologies continue to evolve. The most important goal is to remain connected to each other, realize this is a new way to work and be forgiving of missteps as you grow into a highly effective distributed team. And remember, these practices will remain relevant, and will enhance your work, when we all get to meet again at the office.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

This article was written by the Colliers' Workplace Advisory team, within Occupier Services, whose mission is to advise external and internal clients in the strategic design of their workplaces.

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